



Spring 2016

Funeral Consumers Alliance of Central New York, Inc.

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<http://www.funerals.org/affiliates/syracuse/Welcome.html>

Thank You President Chestnut!

For more than five years, she has served as President of the Funeral Consumers Alliance of Central New York. We are sorry to report that Peggy Chestnut will be stepping down from that responsibility as of the annual meeting, July 20.

Peggy worked hard to advance the educational and advocacy work of the organization. She has overseen two editions of our Price Survey of Central New York Funeral Homes. One of Peggy's goals was to spread the word about the FCA through outreach programs. Under her leadership, we have had booths at the Westcott Street Cultural Fair each summer and at the Senior Fair at the NY State Fairgrounds. At both of those venues we were able to distribute pamphlets and answer person-to-person questions not only about FCA of CNY but also concerns people have about arranging funerals, body donation, end-of-life preference forms and the many alternatives to earth burial.

Members of the board have joined Peggy to give informational presentations at such locations as the Nottingham Independent Living Center, the Manlius Senior Center and various churches in Onondaga and Madison Counties. Peggy's initiatives have pushed us to take a more active role in supporting advocacy and lobbying efforts with state government over issues such as Dignity in Dying and regulation of the funeral industry.

More than five years ago, Peggy succeeded her husband Jae Evangelisti as our President. We thank both of them for their long service and fresh ideas. It will be our large and ongoing task to find their replacement.

FCA of CNY ANNUAL MEETING, JULY 20

This year's program for our annual meeting will feature Mr. Herbert John Engman, President of the Greensprings Natural Cemetery in Newfield, NY (just outside of Ithaca). One of the most frequent messages on our answering machine is about green or natural burials. Greensprings is one of the oldest natural cemeteries in the country. Mr. Engman will talk not only about the history of the natural cemetery movement but also about the requirements for a green burial. You will have an opportunity to ask questions after Mr. Engman's presentation.

Our annual meeting is open to all FCA of CNY members and their friends/relatives. It's your chance to meet other members of this organization, ask questions and provide your suggestions about our services. Besides the informational program, there will be plenty of yummy summer goodies to eat and drink.

This year's annual meeting will be held at the CNY Philanthropy Center located at 431 East Fayette St. in Syracuse. Start time is 6:30. There is plenty of parking near the Center. There is street parking available on East Fayette, East Washington and Genesee Streets. A Murbro surface lot is located within a block of the building that you enter on East Washington Street, next to Jazz Central.

A covered parking garage is located at 300 East Fayette Street.

Follow the signs to the third floor conference room. Don't worry about stairs. There is a very fine elevator that will deliver you to the meeting. For directions and meeting details, please see page four of this newsletter.

FCA of CNY Officers

President.....	Peggy Chestnut
Vice President.....	Peter Moller
Secretary.....	Jenifer Breyer
Treasurer.....	Susan Rainey

A Condensed Version of "A Guide to Jewish Funeral and Mourning Customs"

This guide, published by the Syracuse Rabbinical Council, was written "to provide an understanding of the range of customs as observed in the Syracuse Jewish community." Responsibility of the bereaved relative is to set the time and place for the funeral with a Jewish funeral home, prepare an appropriate obituary, choose six pallbearers (not family members) and meet with an officiating rabbi. The bereaved is otherwise exempt from all responsibilities until after the funeral. Before the funeral, only relatives or very close friends should visit the bereaved. A simple wooden casket is preferred. The deceased is washed and dressed in traditional burial shrouds. "Cremation is not in keeping with Jewish tradition..." and may be considered disrespectful to the body. It is possible that a Jewish cemetery may refuse burial of cremains or that a rabbi will might refuse to officiate when a cremation is planned. The holocaust has added to the sentiment against cremation.

As a general rule, autopsies are not allowed and embalming is contrary to traditional Jewish practice. Burial should take place as soon as possible, unless there are extenuating circumstances. Flowers are not part of the mourning practice, but rather charitable gifts in memory of the deceased are recommended. Shortly before the funeral, the first act of mourning is the tearing of one's garment, and the torn garment is worn for the seven days of mourning ("shiva"). Funeral services are intended to be brief, as is the graveside service. After the casket is lowered into the grave, shoveling some dirt into the grave is considered an act of loving kindness. After burial, a simple meal is traditionally provided by friends and family for the mourners and very close friends. The meal includes hard boiled eggs, a symbol of life, and "round food", symbolizing the wheel of life. Condolence visits begin after the funeral. It is appropriate to talk about the deceased with the mourners and to comfort the mourner, but there should not be a party-like atmosphere.

For copies of this guide, contact any Jewish synagogue or Jewish funeral home. For questions about any of these practices, speak with a rabbi in the Syracuse community.

Joel Potash, MD

Are Your End-of-Life Choices Up-to-Date?

There's never a better time to review your end-of-life decisions than right now. Go over your Preference Form with your family/friends. If you need a new form, send us a stamped, self-addressed envelope and it will come right back to you.

Thank You to our Supporters

Here we say "thank you" to those who have donated money to FCA of CNY since the publication of the last newsletter. You might wonder how these gifts are used. These help defray our routine operating costs, such as the production and mailing of this newsletter.

Please use the form on page four of this newsletter to make your contribution to FCA of CNY.

The following list of donors is incomplete; it doesn't contain the names of many people who made donations but asked that their names not be published.

Beverly and George Adams, Judith Antoine, Helen Ashley, Richard Askeland, Jane Begley, Carol Bickart, June R. Bomberger, Mark Briggs, June Capels, Howard and June Card, Nicolas Caruso, Diane Case, Geraldine Chapman Aird, Malcolm Clark, Robert Coye, Mary Lou Dopyera, Francis Durgin, Arthur Eschner, Jane Feld, Joseph Fischer, Howard Ford, Bettina Frisse, Richard and Deanna Granville, Dorothy Harrold, Elizabeth Ingram, Mary Iverson, Richard Kinsey, George Kirkpatrick, Carleton Laidlaw, Frederick Lyman, Richard Manier, Jr., Mark Monmonier, Margaret Muller, Lisa Mundy, Ramon Nitzberg, Ron Osborn, Mildred Owens, Caroline Palmer, Alan Pike, Ruth Pinckney, Joel Potash, Daniel Rabuzzi, Daniel Rakoske, Milton Sack, Lorraine Schmidt, Edith Schmitz (In Memory of sdflakjsdf asd), Cynthia Shane, Sidney Shiffman, David Stam, Ward Stevens, Jr., Yvonne Tasker-Rothenberg, Ann Tussing, Joyce Ucci, Susan Vanmaarseveen, George Ward, Jr., Joan Welch, John Wyman, Robert Zimmer.



"Bad news, its curiosity"

AID IN DYING PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED SUICIDE

Joel Potash, MD

The NY State Assembly has recently passed an Aid-in-Dying (AID) bill. One of our readers asked that we comment on any negative aspects of Physician-Assisted Suicide (PAS). Some people and organizations, such as Hospice, do not support AID. There is still a stigma attached to the act of suicide. Some consider it an act of violence or mental illness. Some religions respond negatively to suicide. At one time people who committed suicide would not be buried in the main section of a cemetery sponsored by some religions.

It should be noted that attempting suicide is not considered a crime, although it once was. However, assisting suicide is still a crime in NY. For AID, a person who is terminally ill must also have decisional capacity and the physical ability to take the prescribed medicine without assistance from another. If the ingested medicine does not succeed in causing death, a person may suffer further harm and deterioration of their medical condition. Some families may be upset at a family member taking his/her life, even though that person is dying anyway and may have unrelieved pain/suffering.

Currently the American Medical Society and the Medical Society of the State of New York oppose AID/PAS. While no physician will be forced to aid a patient in dying, and physicians following guidelines of the proposed law will not be held liable for a patient's death, some physicians feel that AID/PAS is against the Hippocratic Oath they take which states that physicians should do no harm. Some physicians are not opposed to AID, but feel that some other professional, not a physician, should be responsible for assisting a person to die.

Some worry that AID/PAS might be the beginning of a slippery slope in which AID is used for patients with dementia, disabilities, the aged, etc.

The bill still will have to be approved by the NYS Senate to become law.

New FCA of CNY Newsletter Feature

“The Information Exchange”

Between the publication of each FCA of CNY newsletter I receive emails and phone messages and snail mails with suggestions of articles or media that would be of interest to the membership. This short newsletter cannot contain the full measure of these suggestions. But we can call your attention to them

in this list and cite the original source so you can go out and read, watch or listen for yourself.

- A popular podcast with host Anna Sale is called “Death, Sex, and Money”, from WNYC Studios.
- Go to Gretchen Rubin’s website for a summary of her April 14 interview with Alliston Gilbert about her latest book *Passed and Present; Keeping Memories of Loved Ones Alive*.
- In the *New York Times* April 29 “Ask Well” column Dr. Haider Javed Warraich reminds us that we celebrate every moment in an infant’s journey but are repelled by similar helplessness in the elderly. His column is titled “Seeing the Cycle of Life in my Baby Daughter’s Eyes.” You will find this column in the *NY Times* archives online.
- Laura Dixon’s blog in the May 8 *Huffington Post* is titled “Saying Goodbye When Someone You Love is Dying.” She offers four “lessons” that are worth reading and remembering.
- As the Kremlin releases preservation costs for the first time, *The Moscow Times* looks back on this unlikely 90-year experiment. You’ll find this article by searching the archives of *The Guardian*.
- Social media has made it easy to share condolences after a death—but it hasn’t led to an online culture that’s more sensitive about loss. *The Atlantic’s* June 8 online edition features an article by Claire Wilmut titled “The Space Between Mourning and Grief.”
- A blog called *The White House.gov* carries a thoughtful article by Alonzo Mourning about the value of organ donation titled “How Organ Donation Saved My Life.”
- The online version of *Slate* is sponsoring a series of short films called “The Body That is Left.” A particularly moving film in the series chronicles how a person with Alzheimer’s talks to her family about helping her die. Search their archive by this title.

We hope you will find these suggestions helpful. If it encourages you to send your own contribution, that would be helpful to all the membership!

Looking for a Speaker?

One of the missions of the FCA of CNY is Outreach. We welcome opportunities to meet with church groups and community gatherings of all kinds. Just contact us with a phone call to 446-0557 or send an email to: fcacny@gmail.com. For sure two or three of our Board members will show up to speak and answer questions.

**FCA of CNY Annual Meeting.
 Wednesday July 20, 6:30.
 CNY Philanthropy Center,
 (Previously the University Bldg.)
 431 East Fayette St. Syracuse**

within a block of the building that you enter on East Washington Street, next to Jazz Central. A covered parking garage is located at 300 East Fayette Street.



Help Your FCA of CNY Save Money!

Many members elect to have their newsletter emailed to them and this helps us save on postage costs. If you would like to help, send us a message requesting that we email all your subsequent newsletters. The best way to let us know? Send an email to: fcacny@gmail.com

“To be idle is a short road to death and to be diligent is a way of life; foolish people are idle, wise people are diligent.”
 Buddha

Don't miss this summer's annual meeting! This year's program for our annual meeting will feature Mr. Herbert John Engman, President of the Greensprings Natural Cemetery in Newfield, NY (just outside of Ithaca). There will also be an opportunity to ask questions of the FCA of CNY board members, chat with other members and enjoy summer-time refreshments. This meeting is open to the public, so please bring friends or relatives who might be interested in the mission of your FCA of CNY.

There is plenty of parking near the Center. There is street parking available on East Fayette, East Washington and Genesee Streets. A Murbro surface lot is located

I would like to support the work and mission of the FCA of CNY. Please find my check enclosed in the amount of \$ _____.

Your name: _____

Your address: _____

May we honor your gift with your name in our next Newsletter? _____

Please use the pre-addressed envelope enclosed in this newsletter to mail your contribution back to us.